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ABSTRACT

In analyzing past and present conditions of external degree programs, it is apparent there is emerging support for lifelong learning. There has been an increase of American interest in the external degree program, particularly during 1970. There are five external degree-related developments which contribute to increasing lifelong learning opportunities: (1) the extension of degree granting authority, (2) the geographic extension of institutional operations, (3) the use of the community as an educational resource, (4) the stimulation of external degree programs for facilitative and supportive services, and (5) the observations and recommendations reflecting professional opinions. Competence has become the organizing basis for degree programs. If external degree programs encourage learning outside traditional patterns of residential study, such programs increase the need for techniques and services for assessing learning whenever or wherever it may have occurred. The major approaches receiving attention are credit by examination, course evaluations, individual assessment, and validation model external degree programs. There are problems in the programs which require resolution, however, before the "Learning Society" becomes a reality. (A 32-item bibliography is included.) (Author/KP)

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

PROMISING PROGRAM VENTURES:

A Review of Recent Developments Regarding the External Degree

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PROMISING PROGRAM VENTURES

In 1971 one of the Carnegie Commission reports was issued under the title, Less Time, More Options: Education Beyond the High School (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1971). While there may be some debate regarding the implications and the desirability of less time, unquestionably the recent pace toward more options has been phenomenal. Research conducted for the Commission on Non-Traditional Study (Ruyle, Geiselman & Hefferlin, 1973) found that half the institutions of higher learning in the country were offering new programs and that the great majority of the non-traditional programs were not more than two years old. Similarly in 1973 it was reported that more than 350 institutions offered some form of cooperative education and another 200 programs were in the planning states (Wooldridge, 1973). The institutions participating in the College-Level Examination Program in 1973 were over 1,500. The number of candidates tested via CLEP in 1972-73 was 61,936, an increase of approximately 200% over the previous year. In May 1973, 54,778 candidates took 70,651 Advanced Placement Examinations. Their examination grades were sent to 1,437 colleges and universities.

All the above illustrations of increased educational options refer to opportunities within the traditional and conventional educational establishment. Analyses of past participation and the rate of growth of the educational periphery (programs offered by business, government, churches, television, proprietary schools, etc.) indicate the periphery has been growing more rapidly than the educational core (kindergarten through graduate school). Moses (1970a, b; 1971) has presented data to show that in 1940 school enrollments were almost double those of other learning activities--30 million students formally enrolled compared to only 17 million in the educational periphery. However, Moses has predicted that by 1975 the number of students pursuing formal learning outside of schools and colleges will exceed the number inside. He has anticipated 67 million learners in the educational core compared to 82 million learners in the periphery. If his analyses approximate what is occurring in only the grossest ways, is it any wonder that this conference as well as the entire series of AAHE sponsored regional conferences of this fall have as their theme "The Learning Society: Responding to a Buyer's Market?"

I plan to direct my remarks to recent developments that may lie in the boundary area between what has been called the educational core and the periphery. Specifically I plan to discuss developments regarding external degree programs. Cyril O. Houle (1973) in his analysis of the external degree offered the following definition: ". . . one awarded to an individual on the basis of some program of preparation (devised by himself or by an educational institution) which is not centered in traditional patterns of residential study [pp. 14-15]." It is in this sense that I shall be using the term.

The amount of interest in external degrees and the extent of their development may not be fully appreciated. In part this is due to the fact that the term "external degree" is used relatively infrequently in the titles of programs by the institution under whose auspices they are offered. Other names used for such programs are open universities, universities without walls, extended universities or special adult degree programs. In instances such as Thomas A. Edison College, all degree programs are external yet the institution's name does not convey this information.

From 1970 to 1973 within state public education systems approximately 25 systems had either planned such programs or had appointed groups to see to their implementation, and it is clear that we have not reached the end of this road. Furthermore, Houle's definition, in its most all-inclusive sense, would permit extension degrees, special degree programs for adults, and adult evening college degrees to be included as external degrees. With this in mind the actual number of operational external degree programs is fairly substantial. In 1972-73, for example, there were 181 institutional members of the Association of University Evening Colleges alone. Popular as is the adult evening college model of an external degree, higher educational institutions, other agencies, and individuals have been fairly inventive in designing additional models of degree programs that are not centered in traditional patterns of residential study. A year ago in a paper prepared for the Commission on Non-Traditional Study, I was able to describe and illustrate five models of external degree programs in addition to that represented by the adult evening college (Valley, 1972).

The year 1970 can be regarded as a landmark year for American interest in external degree programs. While Open University in England had not yet admitted its first students, its plans were known and found to be sufficiently attractive to American educators that the trek to visit and to study Open University had begun. While in England, visitors also had the opportunity to become familiar with two other variations of external degree, namely the University of London and the National Council for Academic Awards. In the United States, in an address at the annual meeting of the College Entrance Examination Board in 1970, Alan Pifer (1970), President of the Carnegie Corporation, asked if the time had not yet come for an external degree in America and urged experimentation and study of different models. It was shortly thereafter that Ewald B. Nyquist (1970), the Commissioner of Education of the State of New York, indicated his support for a degree to be based largely on examinations to be offered by the NY Regents. Further, Chancellor Boyer of the State University of New York announced the establishment of Empire State College, and in California both the University and the State University and Colleges System announced their intention to move ahead. And professional educators and potential students alike were trying to understand another program with a disarming name, the University Without Walls. As Michael Marien (1972) observed, we were moving toward open systems of education at all levels of learning and we had two strategies that we could use: we could reform the existing system or we could promulgate new systems. With regard to external degree programs we could lean to the former strategy if we saw the problem as one of restriction on access to residential collegiate and university study. We could lean to the latter strategy in the belief that residential study was not necessarily the best or most effective form of postsecondary education for all individuals. To implement these strategies we have called upon various technological, administrative and educational techniques. Technological techniques would include educational television, audio and visual cassettes, computer assisted instruction, radio, telelectures, etc. Educational techniques would include the development of special curricula or new courses, programmed self-directed study, practicums, internships, etc. Administrative techniques would include modifications of traditional academic calendars and schedules, week-end classes, intensive courses, revisions of

academic regulations. A further example of an administrative technique is the extension of degree granting authority to institutions or agencies whose major function is not teaching or instruction.

Two major general themes in higher education provide a framework within which to cast recent development pertaining to external degrees. The first theme is the emerging support, almost world-wide, for the concept of lifelong learning: the view that education is an integral and continuous aspect of living rather than something to be completed in preparation for life. The second theme is the emergence of "competence" as the rally word around which new program designs have begun to cluster.

The theme of lifelong learning is expressed in numerous local, national, and international studies and reports (University of the State of New York, 1972; The Commission on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario, 1972; Commission on Non-Traditional Study, 1973; Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973; Faure et al., 1972). Time does not permit a review of these reports here. For our purposes today, I wish to direct attention to at least five external degree related developments each of which can be seen, in its own way, as contributing to increasing lifelong learning opportunities.

First is the extension of degree granting authority. Prior to the 1970's, with some exceptions, authority to grant degrees in the United States was limited to teaching institutions of higher education. Typically a degree was an award made by a college or university, a teaching institution. Additional types of organizations or agencies have now acquired degree granting authority. Two patterns can be discerned: First, organizations whose primary mission is not teaching have organized an instructional program and have secured or have requested degree granting authority from the states in which they are headquartered. Examples are Arthur D. Little, Inc. in Massachusetts and the RAND Corporation in California.

The second pattern is the exercise of degree granting authority by organizations and agencies which do not provide instruction. In Illinois, New Jersey, and New York external degrees are now offered by agencies responsible for coordinating state educational systems. The Illinois Board

of Governors Bachelor of Arts Degree, the NY Regents Degree, and Thomas A. Edison College are the program titles under which this authority is being exercised. Further, the Ohio Board of Regents extended degree granting authority to a consortium of public and private colleges most of which are not located in Ohio. The Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, the sponsoring consortium of the University Without Walls, now has authority to grant degrees. The Union also has been admitted to correspondent accreditation status by the North Central Association. Finally, in Connecticut in 1973, a bill to create a Board for State Academic Awards was under consideration by the General Assembly. The Board, which would not be a teaching body, would have authority to award undergraduate degrees and course credit based on examinations.

A second external degree development that is adding to lifelong learning opportunities is the geographic extension of institutional operations. The removal of place as a restriction on student learning opportunities has been a major feature of external degree programs. The early 1970's saw dramatic extensions of instructional operations. At least five newly established institutions have neither a campus nor permanent central instructional facilities: Minnesota Metropolitan State Colleges is an upper division institution that services the greater St. Paul area: Whatcom Community College in Washington serves a county and has no campus; Wayne County Community College in Michigan has 26 instructional centers in the county and serves 13,000 students, most of whom are part time; Vermont Community College operates anywhere in the state supplying courses needed by the state's rural poor; and Empire State College offers a full baccalaureate program and operates out of centers located in New York state's several educational regions.

Much more extensive than the above is the geographic extension of Northern Colorado University, which by 1972 was offering both baccalaureate and masters degree programs in 16 locations in Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wyoming. Similarly, Nova University headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida offers instruction to students seeking the degree of Doctor of Education in four locations in Florida and in six other states.

While for many years students from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio have dispersed throughout the land to study under the college's cooperative education plan, more recently Antioch has established a network of educational centers ranging from Columbia, Maryland to San Francisco, California. Included in the network are some centers whose long range aspirations are to become independent institutions.

Various technologies are also being used by colleges and universities to bring programs of degree courses to students at off-campus locations. The approaches range from classes being conducted in specially outfitted New York commuter railroad cars to courses televised to special classrooms located in business offices to industrial plants. The latter arrangement permits employees to take courses at their place of business, eliminating commuting to campus, parking problems, travel costs, etc. A new institution that merits continued attention is the State University of Nebraska (S-U-N) that plans a state-wide television network, correspondence study, regional study centers, etc., to service students throughout the state (State University of Nebraska, 1973).

The point to be stressed in the above examples is that classroom instruction is being brought to students at locations far afield from the college's normal teaching base. An interesting byproduct of these efforts is a reexamination of the meaning of residence and a restudy of residence requirements for degree awards.

The third external degree development that is adding to lifelong learning opportunities is the use of the community as an educational resource. The definition of external degree offered earlier indicated that such programs operated outside the framework of resident campus instruction. A question arises as to where indeed the student does learn. In external as well as conventional degree programs, increasingly the community is being seen as an educational resource. Consequently, communities are being approached systematically and efforts are being made to organize their resources to increase their availability for learning. The task, not an easy one, includes inventories of facilities, personnel, equipment, as well as developing procedures to make these resources available and

functional for students who need them. The following examples illustrate different approaches as well as some of the dimensions of the problem:

1) The New York City Regional Center for Lifelong Learning operates under the auspices of the Regents Regional Coordinating Council for Post-Secondary Education in New York City. The Center's mission is to help adults find the instructional or learning resources needed to further their educational goals. The project has inventoried post-secondary and continuing education programs at both collegiate and non-collegiate post-secondary institutions. The next phase will be to operate a center for adults to match their interests and needs to the available programs. The long-range plans include a clearinghouse for the dissemination of information about continuing educational opportunities, guidance, and referral services, and the Center functioning as a catalyst for the development of cooperative regional adult education programs.

2) The Community Involvement Program was designed to establish a Community Involvement Center (CIC) on each community college campus in the State of Washington together with a State Coordination Office. The CIC's function as agencies to direct students to projects in the community as well as the contact through which the community can draw upon the resources of the college.

   The Centers provide faculty orientation and training, supervise and evaluate community projects, develop policies and procedures for awarding academic credits, provide information about the community, maintain a catalog of student placements, assist students in relating their skills and interests to projects, and maintain student records. The project was completed in 1972, and steps have been taken to incorporate its recommendations into community college academic regulations and budgets (Werner, 1973).

3) As an outgrowth of the External Degree Study (Policy Institute of Syracuse University Research Corporation, 1971), the Regional

Learning Service of Central New York was established to develop and operate a guidance system for people unable or unwilling to study at traditional institutions. The service will operate counseling centers. It will also help students to locate learning resources, and to meet other students for mutual psychological support. The Service refers to its third function as "validation": working through panels drawn from faculties of schools and colleges, the Service judges the worth of study materials, learning modules, learner experiences, etc.

4) The Office of Library Independent Study and Guidance Projects established in 1972 by the College Entrance Examination Board intends to assist public libraries to become organizing forces for non-traditional approaches to higher education. The Office reflects the growing interest among libraries in assisting individuals in self-directed study. The project will provide national leadership and support for activities which had been explored in various local efforts (Brooks, 1973; Denver Public Library, 1973). Of related interest is the cooperative arrangement between Ohio University and the Cleveland Public Library, which serves as a learning center for the University's Extended Learning Program (Extended Learning Program, 1973).

5) University Year for Action began in 1971 at 10 colleges and universities and by 1973, 55 institutions were participants in the program. ACTION, the federal volunteer service agency, enters into partnership with educational institutions and low-income community groups to create year-long full-time community service projects for students. Each participating college awards full academic credit to students for full-time work in the community enabling normal progress toward a degree to be maintained.

A fourth way that external degree developments are contributing to lifelong learning opportunities is that external degrees have stimulated or made it attractive or desirable to offer various facilitative or supporting services. The kinds of such services being provided are quite varied and only a few that are national in scope will be cited as illustrations.

Some services are offered directly to students. Examples are the Courses by Newspaper Project and the College-Level Examination Program. The former will provide college courses distributed via 250 newspapers beginning the week of September 30, 1973. A pilot course, "America and the Future of Man," will consist of 20-1400 word units each written by a distinguished teacher. The units are printed once each week on the same day of the week. Those who pursue the course for credit will meet for two sessions of three hours each held in the evening on campus at one of more than 200 cooperating colleges. Midterm and final exams are required. At the beginning of this month the title of the second course to be developed was announced as "Images of America: The Dream and the Reality" (Higher Education Daily, October 1, 1973, p. 4). The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), recognizing that individuals have diverse opportunities to learn, offers a national program of examination for college credit. The use of CLEP is perhaps the single most common element characterizing recently established external degree programs. I commented earlier on its fantastic growth.

Other supporting services assist institutions or professional workers in the field: Two examples of the latter are the Society for Field Experience Education and the National Center for Public Service Internship Programs. Examples of the former are the Office of New Degree Programs, the Instructional Systems Clearinghouse, and the Institute for Off-Campus Experience and Cooperative Education. The parallel emergence of these services with external degree programs since 1970 is striking.

Finally, I call attention to "the elusive consensus." I observe that during the past three years a series of reports have emanated from various national educational commissions or task forces. A question arises whether their findings reflect consensus or divergence of opinion on matters related to external degrees. I urge you to examine the reports issued by the Assembly on University Goals and Governance (The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1971) the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1971, 1973), the Newman Task Force (1971) and the Commission on Non-Traditional Study (1973). Within the two year period covered by these reports the recommendations shifted

from suggestions that certain matters be studied to suggestions for specific structures and arrangements for awarding external degrees. At the same time there are also indications that action responses to various recommendations can be expected. For example, even though the concept of an examining university was not expanded in the Newman Report, a year later at least one state was apparently pursuing the idea in earnest. The NY Regents (University of the State of New York, 1972) urged that ". . . the possibilities of establishing an interstate regional examining center to evaluate post secondary learning experiences and to award credit for appropriate collegiate learning be explored [p. 38]." The Regents report also pointed out, "As a first step toward establishing a regional examining center, the State Education Department has entered into cooperative arrangements with the Department of Higher Education of the State of New Jersey which established Thomas A. Edison College as an external degree-granting institution [p. 37]."

The Commission on Non-Traditional Study, chaired by Samuel B. Gould, as would be expected given its particular mission, directed more attention than have the other study groups to the external degree. Time does not permit even a listing of the Commission's primary recommendations. Yet the Commission's overall posture was clear--new opportunities had to be encouraged and created: the first line of responsibility rested with the establishment; as its efforts fell short, new structures had to be created to fill the breach.

Nonetheless it can be said that five major study groups, working from a national perspective at approximately the same period of time, offer some recommendation on what they are in apparent agreement. However, they also offered different advice and counsel on particular issues. Thus there is room for further discussion, exploration, investigation, and debate.

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It is time to return to the major themes of this paper. You will recall the first theme was the emerging support for lifelong learning--and I have just concluded a series of illustrations of external degree developments related to this theme. Let me now turn to the second theme of the 1970's, that has undergirded developments related to the external degree. I wish to focus attention on competence as the organizing basis for degree programs.

At a variety of institutions, ranging from Alverno College, to Colgate, to Minnesota Metropolitan State College, to the College for Human and Community Services, undergraduate degree requirements are being converted from the conventional 120 semester hours to statements of specific competencies expected of student graduates. Degree requirements expressed as competencies afforded freedoms and opportunities for programs to be shaped as external degrees. That is, if a degree could be awarded whenever a candidate demonstrated he had met the institution's competency expectations, when, where, or how he was taught or learned lost its significance. Learning independent of or external to the college counted--not necessarily more, but at least as much as learning that may have come from a classroom.

Expressions of the theme of competency can be seen in three developments related to external degrees: the increased use of varied techniques and services for assessing learning, the contract learning system, and increased attention and concern for protecting the public interest.

If external degrees encourage learning outside traditional patterns of residential study, such programs increase the need for techniques and services for assessing learning whenever or wherever it may have occurred. The major approaches that have received attention are credit by examination, course evaluations, individual assessment, and validation models of external degree programs. Two national programs and a state based program of credit by examination have expanded in support of external degree opportunities. They are the College-Level Examination Program and the Advanced Placement Program, both sponsored by the College Entrance Examination Board, and the College Proficiency Examination Program of New York. The course evaluation approach is illustrated by the recommendations offered by the American Council on Education for crediting military training (Turner, 1968). A new edition of ACE's "Guide Offering Credit Recommendations to Junior and Community Colleges" is in preparation (CASE, 1973). Two other projects parallel the efforts of ACE but they are directed to crediting courses offered to employees by business and industry (Chaminade College, 1973; Anderson, undated). Individual assessment procedures have developed slowly

and unsystematically and the need for improvement is keenly felt. Several proposals were addressed to the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education and to private foundations in 1973 to support work on the problem. In September 1973, Educational Testing Service in association with the College Entrance Examination Board convened a group representing some of the major programs for the purpose of determining what kind of cooperative major research and development efforts would be needed over the next three to five years. Finally, validation model degree programs have now emerged and are represented operationally by the New York Regents Degree and Thomas A. Edison College. Both of these programs lead not to just course credit but also to the award of associate and baccalaureate level degrees. Despite the recency of their establishment, both programs had awarded Associate in Arts degrees to several hundred candidates by the fall of 1973.

Certain models of external degrees have the potential for individualizing the processes whereby the student moves from enrollment to degree completion. These models require new approaches to the administration and management of instruction as well as the supervision and assessment of the student. Given flexible or variable degree requirements, systematic and organized means are needed for defining the interactive roles, responsibilities and expectations of student and institution. Several external degree programs, for example, Empire State College, Minnesota Metropolitan State College, The Florida State University System External Degree Program, have incorporated contract learning. A contract typically will cover the student's objectives, how the student proposes to obtain his objectives, the educational resources required, how and when they will be used. Further a contract indicates the bases on which the student's performance will be evaluated; the evidence to be submitted to demonstrate that the learning goals have been attained. It is this aspect of the contract learning system together with its stress on behavioral statements of learning objectives that helps to relate external degree programs to the theme of competence.

Finally the theme of competence also winds its way into concerns for program standards and the protection of the public interest. Accrediting agencies have taken note of external degree developments. The Southern

Association of Schools and Colleges, having completed a study of non-traditional programs, issued Standard IX which revised criteria for the evaluation of such programs (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1973). Similarly in 1973, the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education announced the development of new guidelines for non-traditional study programs. These guidelines are intended to assist both regional accrediting commissions as well as their constituent institutions to work within the framework of accrediting without impeding experimentation and innovation. In 1972, North Central Association accepted the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities' University without Walls program as a candidate for accreditation. The general thrust of actions such as these is encouraging to the development of new programs.

However, as external degree programs set aside, as not applicable, those conventions by which the legitimacy of educational programs have been assessed in the past, the public is left more exposed to degree mills and other forms of fraudulent enterprises. Attention has been given to this matter by the Educational Commission of the States. In 1973, a task force report offered model state legislation for the approval of post-secondary educational institutions and authorization to grant degrees. The report was endorsed by the Federal Trade Commission and referred to each of the states for consideration (Education Commission of the States, 1973).

The previous recital of developments over the early 1970's may leave the impression that everything is sweetness and light and that no voices of concern have been heard. This is not so. Bailey (1972) spoke of four serpents in the barrel of shiny apples: the serpent of academic shoddiness, the serpent of false expectations, the serpent of fiscal naivete, the serpent of projected technological miracles. Others, such as Hartnett (1972), the Commission on Non-Traditional Study (1973), have expressed similar concerns. Just this summer Reisman and Grant (1973) in an article focused on the higher education reform of the 1960's called attention to the internal contradictions of the movement and caused the reader to ponder what is ahead.

Thus when we shift our eyes from an inventory of the immediate past and glance beyond the present to the long term future, what can we see? We

note the high enthusiasm for dissolving the distinctions between the time of life to study and the time of life to work. We observe all kinds of educational units reaching out to meet the needs of the new learners. We see the non-traditional movement advancing most significantly when new institutions are established. Yet we are also reminded that the Learning Society is not yet here. That the Learning Society is still a dream, a task to be done. Hopefully the activities and events of today's meeting may help each one of us move forward toward this most ambitious goal.

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